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# THREE LITTLE RUNAWAY TREES

A Christmas Play in Two Acts

BY

# MARY TAYLOR CORNISH

Author of Tommy's Thanksgiving Dinner



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# CHARACTERS

THREE PINE TREES
TREE NUMBER ONE a little girl
TREE NUMBER TWO
Tree Number Three
Christmas Spiritan older girl
Dora
EDITH \school girls
DORA EDITH HELEN  Box School girls
Mrs. O'Brien a poor widow
A Mana young man
A Group of Fairieswho sing a song

Note: The song may be sung by the fairies, or by the audience, omitting the fairies from the cast. If the play is given in a church or auditorium where an organ is available, the latter would be a pleasing feature.

### COSTUMES

- THE TREES should be dressed in brown from head to foot, with branches of pine fastened on the shoulders and reaching above the head. Each arm should have pine branches attached. Bits of pine may be sewed over the dress in different places.
- Christmas Spirit should wear either a very pale blue or a white dress, trimmed with tinsel. Wings should be attached to her arms.
- DORA, HELEN and EDITH wear ordinary street dress, DORA'S and EDITH'S being perhaps a trifle better than HELEN'S.
- Mrs. O'Brien wears a shirtwaist and long skirt, with apron and shawl.

# THREE LITTLE RUNAWAY TREES

Scene: An unimportant street. Curtain rises to show the Three Little Trees hopping about, awkwardly, with their feet held tightly together. They move toward the center of the stage. As soon as they take positions on the stage, the tallest one in the middle, they sing.

Trees [sing to music given on page 17]:

Lonely little trees are we,
Just as sad as we can be;
We were growing in the wood,
Tall and straight as pine trees should,
When a man from a near-by town
Took an axe and chopped us down.
Oh! O-oh! Oh! O-oh!
Took an axe and chopped us down!

TREE NUMBER ONE: Oh, I am so tired!

TREE NUMBER Two: So am I, and my roots ache terribly.

TREE NUMBER THREE: Your roots? [Laughs.] You haven't any. They were cut off.

TREE NUMBER Two [crossly]: Well, then, the place where my roots were, aches. I can hardly stand up. O—ooh! [Totters from side to side.]

# Enter Christmas Spirit

[She goes quickly to The Tree and straightens her up.]

Christmas Spirit: What are you three poor little pine trees doing here? From where do you come?

The Trees all answer at the same time, speaking their words so rapidly and in such a jumble that the audience cannot understand a word.

TREE NUMBER ONE: We lived on a hill in the forest glen-

Tree Number Two: A wicked man with a big old axe chopped—

TREE NUMBER THREE: We are all so tired we don't know-

Christmas Spirit [holding her hands over her ears, and laughing]: Don't all talk at once, Little Trees. You will deafen me. Now then, suppose you [indicates Tree Number Two] tell me.

TREE NUMBER Two: Every winter about this time, men come to the forest to cut down trees. They say they want them for *Christmas* trees.

TREE NUMBER ONE [excitedly]: Yes, and we were on the top of the hill, and the man cut us down and—

TREE NUMBER THREE [interrupting]: And put us in a wagon. But he had hardly got us in there until he spied our sisters and brothers just older than we; then he threw us out—and—

TREE NUMBER ONE [interrupting]: Left us there to die! Wasn't that cruel of him?

Christmas Spirit: Perhaps he did not mean to be cruel. Many are so without realizing it.

TREE NUMBER ONE: You may be right. I remember that he turned to the boy with him, and said: "I am sorry I cut these little trees down. They are too small for Christmas trees."

TREE NUMBER THREE: It wouldn't have been quite so bad, but we all have been longing and praying to be made into Christmas trees.

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT: How did you get to this little side street?

Tree Number One: We wanted to see what the world is like, so we just rolled down the hillside and then stumped, like this [hops a few steps with both feet held tightly together] the rest of the way.

TREE NUMBER Two: And we are all tired. Oh, so tired.

Christmas Spirit: Poor little trees! I should think you would be.

TREE NUMBER THREE: We shouldn't have minded it, though, if only we could have been Christmas trees. Did you ever see a Christmas tree?

Christmas Spirit [smiling]: Indeed, I have. My name is Christmas Spirit.

TREE NUMBER ONE: Christmas Spirit! What a lovely name! What do you do?

Christmas Spirit: I send thoughts into the minds of people.

TREE NUMBER Two: What kind of thoughts?

Christmas Spirit: Thoughts of love for others. You know the word Christmas means Christ-mass—a festival in honor of our Lord's birthday. He gave his life for others.

TREE NUMBER Two: And people put gifts on Christmas trees—for others, don't they? [Christmas Spirit nods.] I've heard men in the forest talking about it.

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT: Just nineteen hundred and twenty-five years ago, the Christ Child was born. How better could you celebrate His birthday than by filling your souls with love—love especially for those who are less fortunate than you?

TREE NUMBER THREE: But dear Christmas Spirit, we are only little trees. We can't do anything, can we?

Christmas Spirit [smiling]: Dear me! I had forgotten you were trees and not human. My dear little trees, you show your love for others in everything you do. When you are growing, you are a blessing to mankind. When you are transformed by men's hands into beautiful furniture, into houses, into ships, into the thousand other things trees may be made into, you are a blessing. If it be your lot to be cut into fuel to keep the hearth cheery and people warm, you are a blessing. If you die only to rot and decay, you nourish Mother Earth, and are still one of mankind's greatest blessings. You are one of God's most wonderful gifts, Little Trees.

TREE NUMBER Two: Christmas trees seem to make people especially happy. I wish we could see one.

Christmas Spirit [enthusiastically]: I know what we can do. I shall stay here, just back of you [takes her place just back of Tree Number Two, spreading out her wings] and as people pass down this road, I shall try to lodge a bit of my spirit with them. If they are proud and selfish, I shall probably not be able even to attract their attention. You must help me, Little Trees.

## Enter a Man

[He walks with head downcast, as if worried]

Christmas Spirit [stretching out her arms toward him]: Oh, man, look at these trees and think of some child whom you might make happy with one of them. [The Man's head is still bent as he walks slowly on.] You see, dear Trees, he does not hear my voice. He cannot even see you.

TREE NUMBER ONE: Is he proud and selfish?

Christmas Spirit [shaking her head]: It is not pride with him. He looks as if he were troubled. Some are so weighted with the cares of this world that they never hear my voice. If they would but listen, they might gain happiness from me.

TREE NUMBER Two: We'll help make him see us. Come, Sisters, let us sing our whispering wind-song. He will never know we are singing; he will think it is the wind blowing through our branches.

Trees [prolonging the "ss" gives the idea of wind. If lips are moved to a whistling position, then flattened again, two or three times during the holding of the "s", the effect will be better]: Chris-ss-ss mas . . . ss . . . trees . . . szz . . . zzzzz eezzzzzz . . .

[The Man, still lost in thought, pays no attention.]

Christmas Spirit: His mind is on everything save me. I can't get a foothold there.

[The Man stops, apparently in deeper thought, just in front of Tree Number One.]

TREE NUMBER ONE: Shhh! I'll fix him. [She stretches out her hand and sticks him with the pine needles.]

THE MAN [jumping back]: Ouch! [Sees Trees.] Well! What in the world are these pine trees doing here?

Trees [singing]: Chris..ss...ss...mas...ss...ss...ss...

[Tree Number One again stretches forth her hand and pricks him with her pine needles.]

Man: Ouch! Queer little trees. They seem to be trying to talk.

Trees: Chris...ss...ss...ss...ss...ss...ss trees

Man [with sudden inspiration]: By George! I believe I'll take one of these trees down to John Martin's house. The poor fellow's wife is sick in bed, and he has to take care of her and the children, and at the same time work at odd jobs to make a living. Pretty hard lines. I'll decorate this little tree and take it over to his kids this evening.

Trees [gleefully]: We got him.

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT: You did it with your sweet, whispering wind-song.

Tree Number One [laughing]: Sweet, whispering windsong, nothing! I did it with my needles.

Tree Number Two [as Man leads off Tree Number One]:
Let us meet at this spot at twelve tonight, and tell each other what we have found.

TREE NUMBER ONE [calling back as she makes her exit with THE MAN]: I'll be here.

# Enter Dora, Edith, and Helen, right

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT: Here come some children. It will not be hard to find a lodging in their innocent minds. Listen! They are talking.

EDITH: We are going to have the loveliest Christmas tree.

Are you?

DORA: Father bought a tree from a poor man who had a wagon load of them for sale.

HELEN: We were going to have one—but—you know the Lawrence's, don't you?

GIRLS [nodding]: Uh, hu.

Helen: Well, Mr. Lawrence broke his leg three weeks ago and is, of course, out of work. They try to keep up appearances, but they are awfully poor. Mrs. Lawrence was lamenting yesterday that they would have no tree this year for the little ones. So my brother and I decided to let them have the tree we were going to buy. Then Daddy said we would better take the money and buy them something to eat, fruit and things like that! We did and we won't have any Christmas tree.

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT [to Trees]: This child already has me enthroned in her heart. If she sees you, she will make use of you. Sing your little wind-song.

Trees: Chris...sssss....sssss....ssss...masssss....sss...trees...z..zzz.

Helen [joyfully]: Oh, girls! Look! Look at those trees! Why, they are whispering to us. Can't you hear?

EDITH [smiling with a superior air]: That's only the wind, Helen. [Trees wink at each other.] But they will make lovely Christmas trees.

HELEN: Oh! We can make them lovely and shining with Christmas balls and silver tinsel. If both of you have trees, I can take one of these to Lawrence's, and keep the other for my brother and me.

Dora: Surely. That will be nice.

# Enter Mrs. O'Brien, left

DORA: And we shall help you carry them home.

Mrs. O'Brien [wiping her eyes with her apron]: Shure, an' could yez till me the strate to the docthor's?

HELEN: You follow this road two blocks and turn to your right. It's about six blocks from here.

Mrs. O'Brien: Thank ye, Miss. Me Patsy is so sick, an' I'm thinkin' that all what ails him is because I've been promisin' him a nice Christmas tree, an'-an' [wipes her eyes again now I can't give ut to him for the simple rayzun that I've not the money. He'd set his heart on a Christmas tree, too.

HELEN [sympathetically]: The poor little dear. How old is he?

Mrs. O'Brien: He's but sivin, a-goin' on eight—but as shmart as a whip, iv I do say so whut shudden't.

HELEN: You tell little Patsy he shall have his Christmas tree. I'll fix this one for him. See?

Mrs. O'Brien: Oh, ut's a beeyutiful tree, ut is. Nicer than I could ivir have bought.

DORA: Where do you live?

Mrs. O'Brien: Do ye see the little rid house 'way down the strate? [Points.]

GIRLS: Yes.

MRS. O'BRIEN: Wull, that's not ut. Do ye see the white house nixt ut? [Points.]
GIRLS [eagerly]: Yes, we see it.

Mrs. O'Brien: Wull, that's not ut. Do ye see the brown house nixt the white? [Points.]

Girls [peering down the street]: Yes, we see it. It that it?

Mrs. O'Brien: Shure an' ut's not. Do ye see the purty little grane house nixt? [Points.]

GIRLS [peering]: Yes.

Mrs. O'Brien: Shure an' thot's the wan.

Helen: All right. We'll see that Patsy gets his tree.

Mrs. O'Brien [wiping her eyes]: Shure an' 'tis good gurrls ye are. Good-by-an' God bliss ye.

EDITH: Poor Helen! You have no tree after all. If you're going to be like this all of your life, you'll never have anything.

Helen: Oh, well. I have so many other things to make me happy. I can plan something for little brother for Christmas. He will be glad I gave the tree to Patsy.

DORA: Come on, Helen, to my house, and we'll fix up the tree with some of my trimmings.

EDITH: I'll give some, too.

# Dora and Helen each take a tree

Christmas Spirit: My work here is done. Merry Christmas, Little Trees!

TREE NUMBER Two [as GIRLS and TREES exeunt, left, and Christmas Spirit exits, right]: Meet with us at midnight, Christmas Spirit, won't you?

Christmas Spirit: I'll try. But, if I do not see you again, Merry Christmas!

#### CURTAIN

[It is not necessary to have a curtain if it is inconvenient.]

Note: Between Acts I and II, a group of Christmas Fairies or the audience may sing.

## ACT II

- Same Scene. Midnight. Bluish lights flood the stage. Tree Number Two, brilliantly trimmed with Christmas balls and tinsel garlands, stumps to center of stage.
- Tree Number Two [looking all about]: Nobody here. I hope they will come.

# Enter Christmas Spirit

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT: Ah, here you are! I am glad you came. I have so much to tell.

# Enter Tree Number One from right; Tree Number Three from left

- Tree Number One: Oh, Sisters! You never can guess what I have to tell you.
- TREE NUMBER Two: Oh, let me tell about Patsy! He is the dearest little boy! His mother told him Santa Claus would come and bring him a baby Christmas tree. The little fellow went to sleep with a smile on his face. The funny old woman hugged me and cried and cried.
- TREE NUMBER THREE: Cried? Why did she cry? Were you careless enough to stick her?
- TREE NUMBER Two: Of course not. She was crying with happiness. She almost choked me with her hugs, and she said, "Whisht! 'Tis but a baby yez are, like me own Patsy, but nivir hov I laid me eyes on a more beyutifuller tree. An' 'twas a swate young gir-rul that giv yez to me.'

TREE NUMBER ONE: You talk just like her.

TREE NUMBER Two: Oh, but I am happy. Those girls bought ever so many toys and fruits and clothes and piled them all about me on the floor. When Patsy opens his eyes in the morning, the first thing he sees will be me!

Christmas Spirit: If people only realized how much happiness comes from making others happy, I am sure they would do it a little more often.

TREE NUMBER Two: The poor mother said to me, "Shure an' I'll kape yez for a wake, an' then 'tis nice an' warm ye'll kape us, whin I put yez on the fire to burn."

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT: It's hard to tell whether Patsy, or his mother will get the most pleasure out of you.

TREE NUMBER THREE: That is the way it is where I am. Mr. Lawrence, the father with the broken leg, has me right in the corner of his bedroom, and when the children troop in to see him tomorrow morning, they will have a great surprise. Mr. Lawrence was so happy that he sat right up in bed, and said: "You're a little bit of all right, little Christmas Tree!"

TREE NUMBER ONE: Well, you'll never guess where I am!
TREES NUMBER TWO AND THREE: Of course we can. Didn't
the man say he was going to give you to a John Martin?

TREE NUMBER ONE: But who is John Martin?

TREES: How could we know that?

TREE NUMBER ONE: He's the man who CHOPPED US DOWN!

TREES NUMBER TWO AND THREE: Oh! Oh! Tell us about him.

Tree Number One: Well, it seems he threw us out of the wagon because we were too little to sell. He needs every cent he can get for food for his family. His wife is ill, and the poor man has to take care of her and of the children. He has to do the cooking and pick up odd jobs. You never will know how glad he and his wife were to see me. I think he recognized me, because he said: "Wife,

this looks like one of the little trees I was telling you about. They were little beauties, but too small. I had to load up on the kind that sells for the most money."

TREE NUMBER Two: I didn't think he meant to be cruel.

TREE NUMBER ONE: You must be right, Christmas Spirit, in what you say about happiness in giving. The man who gave me to John Martin, has been over twice to see me, and each time he came whistling as merrily as if there were not a trouble in the world.

Christmas Spirit: He has my spirit in his heart now.

TREE NUMBER THREE: Oh, I forgot to tell you about Helen. The corner where I stand is right by a window, and I can see all that goes on at Helen's house. Dora and Edith went home and told their parents about Helen, and what do you think happened?

TREES NUMBER ONE AND Two: What?

TREE NUMBER THREE: Why, the parents bought Helen a lovely tree and trimmed it up with lovely things. It is larger than we are, and it has a lot of presents hung on it. They have put the tree in the dining-room, right where she will see it when she goes down to breakfast in the morning.

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT: I am glad for Helen.

Trees: So are we.

Tree Number Two: It's lovely to be a Christmas tree [sighs], but it cannot last long. And when we are thrown into the fire to give out warmth and cheer, let us bid them farewell with our merriest, crackling song, until our last ember has gone to ashes.

TREE NUMBER ONE: I am sure we shall. But we must get back to our places, you to your Patsy, you to the Lawrence's, and I to John Martin's. Good-by, dear Christmas Spirit.

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT: Good-by? Little Trees, you are not telling me good-by. You cannot. I am enthroned in the

very heart and bark of you.

Trees [sing to music given on page 18]:

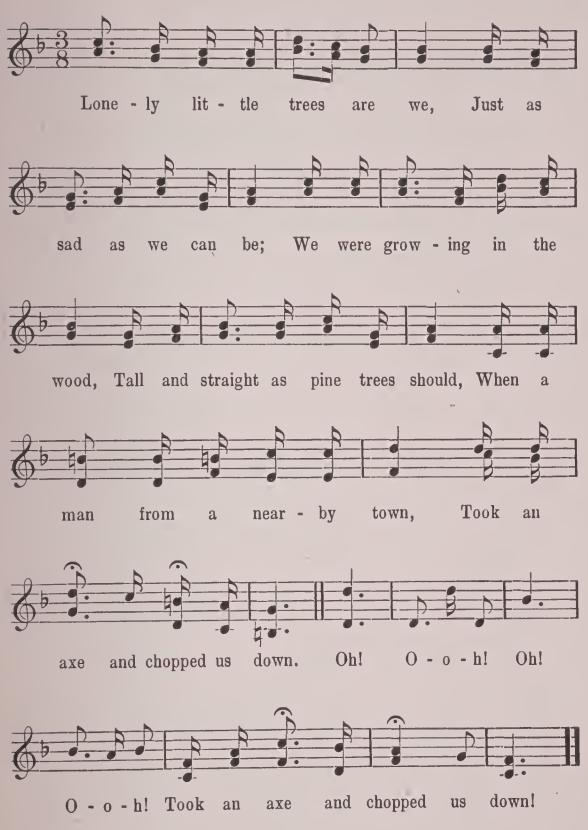
## Song

Happy little trees,
Christmas trees are we;
Clothed with brightness in
Loving memory
Of the Holy Babe
In a manger born,
Come to bless the earth,
One December morn.

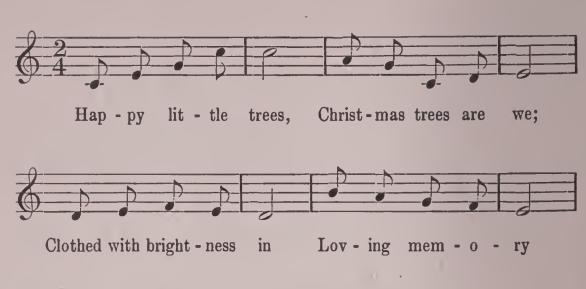
# Chorus

Merry Christmas! Sing His praises!
All along the way.
Merry Christmas! Sing sweet praises
On our Lord's birthday.

# Lonely Little Trees



# Happy Little Trees







Come to bless the earth, One De - cem - ber morn.



Mer - ry Christ-mas! Sing His prais - es! All a - long the way.



Mer-ry Christ-mas! Sing sweet prais-es On our Lord's birth-day.

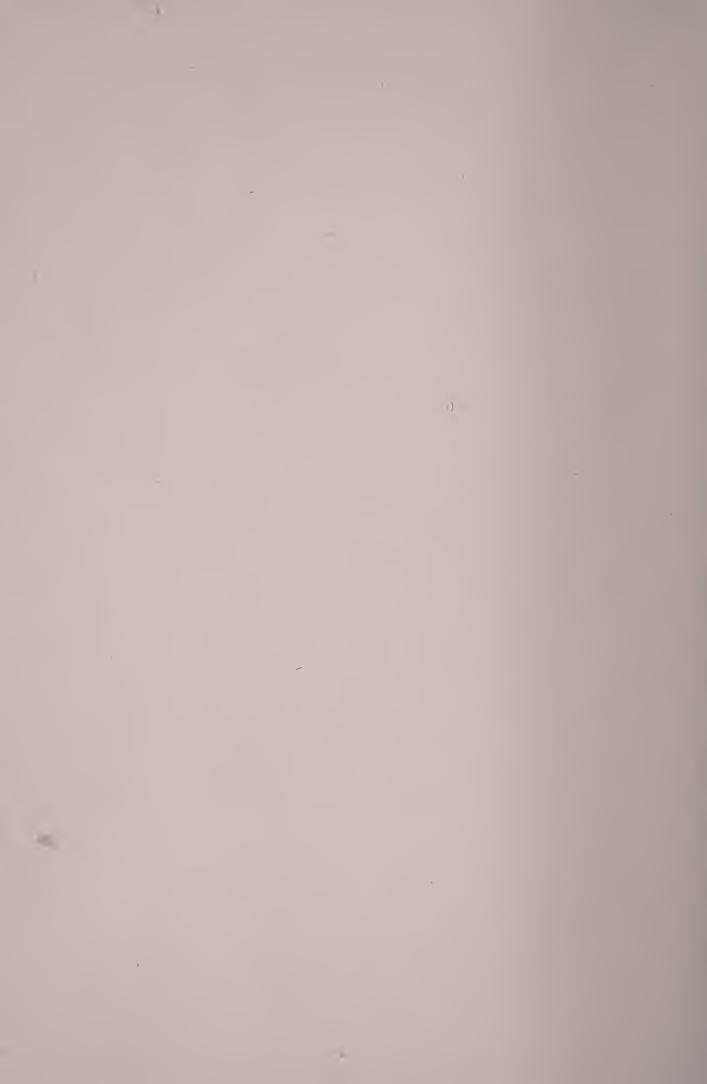


























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